

## Safe Vaccine Storage and Handling

### Outdated or improperly stored vaccines won't protect patients!

**Designate one person** as the vaccine coordinator and assign responsibility for ensuring that vaccines and other biologic agents and products are handled and stored in a careful, safe, recommended and documented manner. **Assign a backup** person to assume these responsibilities during times of illness or vacation. **All personnel** responsible for handling vaccines in an office or clinic setting should be familiar with standard procedures designed to minimize risk of vaccine failure. Inattention to vaccine storage conditions can contribute to vaccine failure.

**All providers** should maintain only a two months supply of vaccine to minimize the impact of any loss.

**For proper storage of Varicella and MMRV (Proquad)**, providers must have a freezer with a separate, sealed freezer compartment that is capable of maintaining a temperature of 5<sup>0</sup>F/ -15<sup>0</sup>C or below.

**Maintain the cold chain** by keeping vaccines at the proper temperature at all times, including transporting vaccines.

### **Ten simple steps for storage and handling:**

1. Store vaccines in the middle of the refrigerator and the freezer and not in the doors or the drawers.
2. Stack the vaccines with air space between the stacks and side /back of the unit to allow cold air to circulate around the vaccine.
3. Separate the privately purchased vaccine from the VFC vaccine and mark them so they are easily identifiable.
4. Store vaccine vials in their cartons, especially MMR, MMRV, HPV, Rota, Varicella, ActHib, Hiberix, Menactra, Menveo and inactivated Flu vaccine which are sensitive to light. Repeated exposure to light can destabilize the vaccine and it is easier to check expiration dates on the boxes than the vials.
5. Check vaccine supply every month and report any wasted or expired vaccine. Notify the Division of Immunization Services about any VFC vaccine that will expire within the upcoming three-month period that cannot be used before expiration.
6. Store shortest-dated vaccines in front and use first, rotating stock effectively.
7. Do not store food or drinks with the vaccines in the refrigerator or freezer.

8. Place bottles of water in the refrigerator and ice packs in the freezer, this will help maintain a stable, cold temperature if there is a power failure or if the door is opened frequently.
9. Safeguard the electrical supply to the refrigerator by posting a “Do Not Unplug” sign on the refrigerator/ freezer outlet.
10. Place a working thermometer in a central area of both the refrigerator and the freezer. Check the temperature twice a day and keep a log to ensure that temperatures are within the appropriate guidelines: **refrigerator 35 - 46<sup>0</sup>F / 2 - 8<sup>0</sup>C, freezer 5<sup>0</sup>F / - 15<sup>0</sup>C or below**. Store diluents in the refrigerator or at room temperature.